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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000046

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/GAVITO/YERGER
STATE FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/FO, PRM/ANE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/07/2017
TAGS: [IZ](#) [LE](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: ACTING FM MITRI ON IRAQI REFUGEES,
SPECIAL TRIBUNAL FUNDRAISING AND HIS PARTICIPATION IN ARAB
INITIATIVE TO SOLVE ELECTION CRISIS

REF: A. STATE 167180 (IRAQI REFUGEES)

[1](#)B. (B) STATE 1197 (TRIBUNAL FUNDRAISING)

Classified By: DCM William Grant for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) DCM and Poloff met Acting FM Mitri to deliver U.S. demarches on Iraqi refugees (ref a) and fundraising for the Special Tribunal (ref b) and discuss the January 5-6 Arab League meeting in Cairo which he attended. Regarding the status of Iraqis detained in Lebanese jails, Mitri said the GOL has halted arrests of refugees in the last six weeks and is working with UNHCR on a Temporary Protection Regime (TPR). He agreed that the GOL should be more pro-active in soliciting funds for the Special Tribunal. Emboffs told him that PM Siniora had told the Ambassador a few days before that he would solicit funds from UAE, Saudi Arabia and others. Also on the Tribunal, Mitri said that the idea of special compensation was actually for any Tribunal judge (not only Lebanese judges) who could demonstrate a need for special compensation to cover costs not covered in a judge's base salary.

[1](#)2. (C) At the Arab League meeting in Cairo, Mitri said he had argued that the draft communique was too ambiguous, but Saudi FM Saud al-Faisal told him the Syrians would not agree to change a single word. Mitri interpreted that to mean that decisions on this issue were coming directly from Damascus. He believes that ambiguities in the communique issued at the end of the Cairo meeting will be the source of hard-to-reconcile differences over interpretation of the text. End summary.

THERE IS PROGRESS ON IRAQI REFUGEE ISSUE

[1](#)3. (C) In a January 9 meeting, Acting FM Mitri assured the DCM and Poloff that the GOL is working with the UNHCR to grant some of the Iraqi refugees residing in Lebanon TPR status. (Note: The TPR would permit those Iraqis to remain legally in Lebanon and not require UNHCR to find a third country resettlement country within one year. End note.) Mitri noted that PM Siniora had asked him to hear out other NGOs and then discuss the issue with the UNHCR. Mitri acknowledged that the GOL lacked an Iraqi refugee policy, and coerced some refugees to return to Iraq. On the positive side, Mitri noted that quite a few refugees had recently been

released from detention and that there had been no arrests for the past six weeks. Mitri indicated that the GOL might reach an agreement with the UNHCR on renewable TPR status for about 10,000 refugees, out of a total of 50,000 estimated to currently reside in the country. Mitri pointed out that UNHCR efforts to settle the refugees in third countries had not been very successful and, referring to the Lebanese domestic "paranoia" about security, said that Lebanon is too fragile and unstable to absorb large numbers of refugees. He stressed that the level of decision-making in the GOL regarding the refugees had to be raised and that he had suggested appointment of a special coordinator for refugee issues.

SEEKING FUNDS FOR THE SPECIAL TRIBUNAL

14. (C) In response to ref b demarche on fundraising for the Special Tribunal, Mitri agreed that the GOL should be more pro-active in soliciting donations from other countries, especially Arab states. DCM noted that PM Siniora had told Ambassador on January 7 that he would ask for such contributions from UAE, Saudi Arabia and others.

15. (SBU) DCM noted the negative impression of key UN donors regarding the GOL proposal for extra pay for Lebanese judges serving on the Tribunal. Mitri (protect) said that he was personally against the idea and had spoken against it in cabinet. He acknowledged that there was some confusion regarding the meaning of special compensation and clarified that the idea was actually a special fund available only to judges, regardless of nationality, who could demonstrate a need for special compensation, e.g. to provide for family security.

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QATAR A SUBCONTRACTOR FOR SYRIA AT ARAB LEAGUE?

16. (C) Mitri represented Lebanon at the January 5-6 Arab League foreign ministers meeting in Cairo. He was not in the separate meeting of some FMs that resulted in the Arab League communique on resolving Lebanon's presidential impasse that is ambiguous on key points. Mitri said that when he first read the draft communique, he immediately thought it should be clearer on division of seats in the cabinet but Saudi FM Saud al-Faisal argued against it saying that if even one word was changed the Syrians would withdraw their approval. Mitri took this to mean that Qatari FM Hamid Bin Jassim, who some suspect to be acting as a "subcontractor" for Syria on this issue, had personally gotten President Assad's okay and could not or would not go back to him. Mitri was optimistic that AL SYG Amr Moussa will spend his time in Beirut beginning January 9 trying to dissipate the ambiguities in the Arab foreign ministers' communique in a way that favors the pro-government March 14 view.

17. (C) Mitri said that in Cairo, the Arab FMs indicated a preference for, first and foremost, getting a president elected; mention of the government's formulation was secondary and was only added at the insistence of Syria and Qatar. Mitri noted that Moussa was now testing, for the umpteenth time, whether the Syrians would live up to their word, and added that in one of the Cairo meetings Moussa used the term "monitoring mechanism" to suggest that when the Arab foreign ministers meet again on January 27, he will report the results of his Beirut meetings and hold the parties he believes responsible for the (possible) failure of the initiative accountable.

18. (C) Mitri recommended that the U.S. publicly express its support for the initiative, to dispel rumors that the U.S. is not unhappy with the presidential vacuum.
FELTMAN